

Dear Felecia,

Thank you for writing us at Christian Questions Radio. You wanted to know what the seven spirits of God represent in the Book of Revelation.

The first mention of the seven spirits in Revelation is found in chapter 1, verse 4, "To the seven churches in the province of Asia: Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits before his throne." We believe the "seven spirits" actually refer to the one Holy Spirit of God. The seven Spirits are figuratively portrayed as sentinels "before his throne," that is, as emissaries of Jehovah sent to aid and enlighten the Church (John 14:16, 17; 15:26) throughout the entire Gospel Age. Seven separate, successive, timely messages would be sent from heaven to guide the Church during the seven stages of its chronological development. However, the messages are not solely limited to one Church of a particular era. Each message is beneficial to the whole Church in all seven stages of its development: "what the Spirit says to the [seven] churches" (Revelation 2:7).

The first message from the Spirit of God is to the Church of Ephesus (Revelation 2:1-7). Verse seven says, "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God." This text is a message emanating from the Father Himself. The term "Spirit" is personified as the voice of prophecy and signifies a doctrine or teaching. We believe the message to this Church, stated in figurative language, is one of renewal to fellowship with God. Therefore, by proper deeds of repentance, Christians would be able to achieve harmony with God and Jesus and ultimately receive inheritance with the saints.

The second message through God's Holy Spirit is to the Church in Smyrna (Revelation 2:8-11) The Spirit of God says, "He who overcomes will not be hurt at all by the second death." (Revelation 2:11) This scripture was an encouragement to this Church, particularly because it was during that time period that Christians were being persecuted by pagan Rome. For faithfulness unto death, the promise is not only a crown of life but also immunity to the "second death." Thus the faithful would receive life in its highest form: immortality.

The third message received through the Spirit is to the Church in Pergamum (Revelation 2:12-17). In verse 17 the Spirit says to the churches, "To him who overcomes, I will give some of the hidden manna. I will also give him a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to him who receives it." Manna, the bread that came down from heaven as a life-sustainer for Israel, in the above scripture represents spiritual food, the Word of God, as well as Jesus himself, the Living Bread. In another sense the "hidden manna" God offers is a special and particular kind of manna to his faithful ones, namely, the hidden manna of life and immortality.

The “white stone” represents friendship. In ancient times a white stone was divided and each person inscribed his name on the flat surface, after which the parts of the stone were exchanged. Producing either half was sufficient to insure friendly aid. Thus the divided stone became a mark of identification. Therefore, we believe the white stone signifies a precious token of the Lord’s love, and the new name written in the stone suggests that Jesus will give a personal name to each overcomer. The new name signifies a new relationship to God. This relationship—like stone—is lasting and imperishable and it is white. Here “white” signifies an innocent, pure, holy relationship. The full seal of the Holy Spirit will be given in the resurrection when the new body is received. In a sense, the stone is loaned to the Lord’s people now; if they are faithful, it will ultimately be given them.

The fourth message received through the Spirit is to the Church of Thyatira (Revelation 2:18-29). “To him who overcomes and does my will to the end, I will give authority over the nations—He will rule them with an iron scepter; and he will dash them to pieces like pottery—just as I have received authority from my Father. I will also give him the morning star. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” (Revelation 2:26-29) At this time Papal Rome was in the height of her glory, claiming she was the Kingdom of God and that Christ’s reign had begun through his vicegerent, the pope. The Papacy literally ruled the nations with a firm hand, an iron rod, dashing into pieces all that opposed her. During this time in history Jesus’ faithful followers could patiently bide their time for they knew that Jesus had promised to perform his good work toward them in due time. Thus overcomers were comforted with the promise that they would occupy a similar power over the nations when Christ would establish his Kingdom on earth. “And I will also give him the morning star.” Jesus himself states, “I am . . . the bright and morning star” (Revelation 22:16). The “morning star” is a symbol of hope. It indicates that the faithful will be intimately associated with Jesus in heaven, sharing his personal fellowship and glory as luminaries in the Kingdom of heaven.

The fifth message received through the Spirit is to the Church of Sardis (Revelation 3:1-6). “He who overcomes will, like them, be dressed in white (signifying purity). I will never blot out his name from the book of life, but will acknowledge his name before my Father, and his angels. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” (Revelation 3:5-6) The reward of white raiment consoled these faithful ones, who were ostracized by their professed brethren for not following the doctrines set forth by Papal Rome. The book of life mentioned above is God’s list of names of those having received a heavenly salvation. (See Philippians 4:3; Revelation 13:8; and 21:27.) Revelation 13:8 and 21:27 specifically refer to the Lamb’s book of life, which is a direct reference to Jesus and the heavenly reward offered to those who, having received the Holy Spirit, wish to follow Him by living a sacrificial life of righteousness.

The sixth message received through the Spirit is to the Church of Philadelphia (Revelation 3:7-13). Verses 11-13 tell the members of this Church to hold on to what they have [their doctrine and their faith] because Jesus will be returning soon. "I will write on him the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God; and I will also write on him my new name." (Revelation 3:12) In this scripture our Savior promises to write three names on the overcoming Christian: the name of God, the name of God's city, and Jesus' own name. This is symbolic language meaning that in Christ's future kingdom on earth mankind will know with certainty all those who attained the heavenly reward. The name of the city, New Jerusalem, implies that the Church, collectively, will be seen as God's government on earth.

The seventh and last message received through the Spirit is to the Church of Laodicea (Revelation 3:14-22). We believe this message is particularly geared to followers of Jesus living at the present time. The message is a harsh admonition. The verses speak of a "lukewarm" or indifferent condition manifested by the church as a whole regarding the Word of God. Verse 20 tells us that Jesus is already here and at the door knocking. It goes on to say, "If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." We believe this scripture tells us that Jesus is now present, waiting for a response to his message (a reaction to his knock) regarding various time-feature prophecies and their fulfillment. If we "open the door" (open our hearts to Jesus) we will "sup with him" (be fed with heavenly food [truth] from the Scriptures.) This supping of present truth is offered only to those living in the Laodicean period of the Church.

The next verse that mentions the seven Spirits of God is found in Revelation 4:5. "... and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God." This text directly refers to the Holy, which was the secret compartment of Ancient Israel's Tabernacle. It contained seven lamps of oil atop the candelabrum, which provided light and, in turn, enabled the priesthood to perform their sacred duties. The fact that seven lamps are supplied indicates the presence of a "lamp" (a message) to guide and enlighten all of God's children throughout the seven successive stages of their journey from Ephesus to Laodicea.

The last mention of seven Spirits of God is found in Revelation 5:6. "Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders. He had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth." In this scripture the emphasis is on Jesus (the Lamb), the agent of God's salvation. The fact that the Lamb (Jesus) has "seven horns and seven eyes" indicates that the Father entrusted to him the complete custodianship of the Church throughout its seven stages. The Lamb's horns and eyes express his vigilance and concern for the Church by succoring it whenever and wherever the need arose for spiritual and sometimes physical aid.

We hope we have answered your question. There is so much more we could say regarding the “seven Spirits of God” and the messages that were given to the Church. If you would like to learn more about this particular topic or about the Book of Revelation in general, we would suggest ***The Keys of Revelation*** by Frank Shallieu, (1993) (Revelation Research Foundation, Inc.) It is available in hard cover on the Internet for about \$28. Be sure to sign up for CQ Rewind at www.christianquestions.net. The service is free without obligation and will provide you with scriptural perspective on many questions and topics.

Sincerely,

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